

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /158 W

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R 071715Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2578

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ROME 0219

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IT LY

SUBJECT: ARAB DEMAND FOR DISMISSAL OF ITALIAN EDITOR

REF: ROME 0169

1. REPORTED LIBYAN DEMAND FOR DISMISSAL OF LA STAMPA EDITOR
ARRIGO LEVI AND THREATENED ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST LA STAMPA
OWNER FIAT CONTINUE TO RECEIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE IN ITALIAN
PRESS. STAUNCH MEDIA DEFENSE OF LEVI CONTINUES UNABATED ALONG
WITH INTENSE ACTIVITY AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AIMED AT FINDING
SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF CONTROVERSY.

2. STRONGEST CONDEMNATION NOT ONLY OF LIBYANS BUT OF FIAT
AND STATE OIL ENTITY ENI AS WELL CAME OVER WEEKEND DURING
SPEECH BY GIUSEPPE AMADEI, PSDI UNDER SECRETARY IN MINISTRY
OF FINANCE. BRUNT OF AMADEI'S CRITICISM WAS DIRECTED AT
ENI FOR ALLEGEDLY THROTTLING ENI-OWNED MILAN PAPER IL GIORNO
WHICH ALMOST ALONE AMONG ITALIAN PRESS HAS CARRIED ARAB-LA STAMPA
STORY WITH NO COMMENT. AMADEI ALLEGED THAT ENI HAD ORDERED IL
GIORNO TO GIVE MINIMUM PROMINENCE TO THE STORY IN ORDER TO AVOID

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TROUBLE WITH THE ARABS. AMADEI ALSO CRITICIZED FIAT FOR LACK
OF ANY OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THE AFFAIR.

3. FONOFF SOURCE TELLS US THAT CASE CONTINUES TO RECEIVE HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. COMMENTING ON REPORTS THAT ARAB BOYCOTT COMMITTEE APPEARED TO BE SOFTENING ITS STAND AND POSSIBLY PREPARING FOR GRACEFUL RETREAT, SOURCE SAID THAT WHAT REALLY CONCERNED HIM WAS UNYIELDING POSITION OF LIBYANS. SOURCE SAID THAT LIBYAN CHARGE HAD DELIVERED ANOTHER STRONG PROTEST TO THE MINISTRY JANUARY 5 AND SHOWED NO SIGN OF BACKING OFF ITS EXTREMIST DEMANDS. FONOFF OFFICIAL SAID FIAT PRESIDENT AGNELLI WOULD BE IN ROME JANUARY 8 FOR FURTHER ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS.

4. EMBOFF THEN ASKED FOR BACKGROUND BEHIND FOREIGN OFFICE JANUARY 5 STATEMENT TAKING ISSUE WITH LONDON TIMES ARTICLE ACCUSING LIBYA OF DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN ROME AIRPORT MASSACRE. FARNESINA STATEMENT CAUTIOUSLY NOTED THAT ON BASIS OF PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION IT WAS NOT CORRECT TO CREDIT TIMES STORY IN FULL. IN FACT, STATEMENT CONTINUED, IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY THAT TIMES STORY WAS NOT EXACT. FONOFF SOURCE SAID THAT HE HAD OPPOSED ISSUANCE OF STATEMENT SINCE HE BELIEVES LIBYANS WERE INVOLVED IN ROME AIRPORT TRAGEDY. HOWEVER, SENIOR LEVELS OF FARNESINA THOUGHT IT DESIRABLE TO BALANCE ANTI-LIBYAN PRESS COVERAGE WHICH HAD RESULTED FROM REPORTAGE OF TIMES ARTICLE. OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DECISION TO ISSUE STATEMENT WAS CONNECTED WITH ITALIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS IN GENERAL AND LA STAMPA CASE IN PARTICULAR. VOLPE

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